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President's Page

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The President's Page

Over a period of years the therapeutic-products industry has done an incredible job. It has contributed greatly to alleviating the misery of illness and disease and to decreasing their complications. Likewise, it has encouraged business and to expand in means providing life-saving measures it has made increased use of advertising ingenuity. Nothing is going on with that, which I pointed out in this journal in 1960,² nor is anything going on with our pharmaceutical industry being the world's largest. Rather, the quality of advertising, the forces of expediency and the competition that in the field of health care insensibly exaggerates importance, conceals the false impression, overstates supposedly useful benefit, and appeals to naïve buying processes.

Innumerable laymen are easy prey for the influence of drug advertising in nonprofessional publications; even physicians find it extremely difficult to escape almost any therapeutic proposal that is offered assuredly and eagerly.

Nevertheless, in medical and legislative circles, more than ever before, there has evolved increasing awareness of the need to exercise a moral obligation to society: to promote respectable advertising in medical and nonmedical communication media, to foster exacting studies of drug products, to encourage restraint in interpreting drug tests and to use powerful and costly drugs sparingly and infrequently.

For this reason Dr. James L. Goddard, the new Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, in ordering recently the removal from the market of countless ineffective throat lozenges, has acted, when voluntary action failed, to try to "hold fast that which is good" for the pocketbook and the health of society.

Four months ago Dr. Bernard L. Kreilkamp, member of the Board of Directors and Chairman of the Committee on Medical Advertising of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds, in an "open letter" in the January 1966 issue of *The Catholic Journalist*, the official publication of the Catholic Press Association, urged the "editors of Catholic periodicals to reject all advertisements which promise to cure physical defects and diseases or to give relief from them."¹

Unfortunately, such advertising, in my experience, appears more often in the Catholic press than in first-class non-Catholic newspapers and magazines. Also its effect is three-fold: a financial waste for the consumer of these advertised products and treatment; the potential grave evil of delayed diagnosis and management of illnesses and diseases, as well as of acquiring drug-related conditions, and the equating of substandard advertising with second and third-class publishing policies.

Therefore, I should hope Dr. Kreilkamp's "communique" to the Catholic Press Association is studied well and earnestly considered.

Human beings obviously desire relief from discomfort and ill-feelings. But our concern—the Catholic concern—for man should be pure. It should be honest. There is need to work for effectual Catholic action of this kind, the kind of action individual Guilds and physicians of the National Federation are capable of providing—not by legislation, I should hope—by a moral amalgamation of individual and collective concern for the welfare of human life.

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¹ Kreilkamp, B. T.: An Open Letter to CPA Members. *The Catholic Journalist* 17:5 (Jan.) 1966.

² Taylor, F. M.: The Adversary Within. *The Linacre Quart.* 28:18 (May) 1960.